

General suggestions for preparing assessment

A shoreline inventory and assessment that effectively contributes to the planning process will:

1. Indicate key factors influencing the long term condition of the shoreline at a regional or watershed scale
2. Interpret the condition of the shoreline within a local jurisdiction
3. Identify trends and emerging issues
4. Identify opportunities for protection, restoration, public access, and use

There are regional influences and reach-specific shoreline influences. Ecology suggests preparing a **tiered characterization** that starts with a broad examination of physical and biological conditions that affect the jurisdiction, then focuses on specific shoreline reaches to present findings and recommendations.

For some examples of this kind of assessment report, you might download the draft report prepared by the [City of North Bend](#), and the final report prepared by the [City of Sumner](#). While these assessments are for small jurisdictions, the basic approach could be applied at a county level.

I. Introduction

Describe the **purpose** of the document, orient the reader to the area under regulatory **jurisdiction**, and outline the **methods** used in preparing the analysis.

Purpose

Include a concise statement of purpose. Many jurisdictions are conducting assessments to to provide a basis of information for the public and decision-makers in updating shoreline master programs and critical areas ordinances. Include any other purposes of the assessment (e.g., addressing ESA concerns).

Shoreline jurisdiction

Include a description of shoreline jurisdiction, explaining clearly what is regulated by the SMP. This will help orient the reader to the study area. Note that the SMA includes options for setting jurisdiction boundaries (i.e., 100-year floodplain or floodway + 200 feet).

Describe areas that meet the definition of “shorelines of statewide significance” – areas given special recognition and more specific use preferences under the SMA (90.58.020 and 90.58.030). Include a location map.

Methods

Provide a concise description of the approach the city used for the inventory and analysis.

II. Regional overview

Because shorelines reflect the interactions between the physical and biological characteristics of watershed conditions, it is helpful to **describe the most important regional influences**.

Summarize the climate, topography and native vegetation of the region to set the context for the major natural influences on the shoreline.

Identify already known critical issues for the watershed. This will focus the scope of your inventory and assessment. To identify the critical issues in your region consider:

- Regulatory mandates (for example ESA, TMDL)
- Major land uses that affect the shoreline (dams, railroad, logging, mining, irrigation)

Include an **outline map** of the region, with the outer extent of jurisdictional boundaries. Include city boundaries and urban growth areas. This section will help show what things your jurisdiction can and can't affect, and will help make the report more useful in coordinating with adjacent jurisdiction and cities.

III. Reach-level analysis

There are two primary goals for the reach-level analysis: 1) Summarize critical physical and biological resources and land use for each shoreline reach, and 2) Identify key opportunities for protection, restoration, public access, and use.

For each reach, complete a descriptive narrative that identifies the historical and recent activities that have impacted, and particularly those that continue to influence the shoreline. Describe the major natural features that are evidence of the shoreline processes.

Characterizing the reach at the broader scale helps to determine what the driving processes are, what alterations have occurred to these processes, and in turn, the effect these changes have on the shoreline condition. The appropriate management measures for each shoreline or stream reach can then be explored.

Summary of reach location, key attributes

Map the extent of shoreline jurisdiction. Describe the reach location and key characteristics to orient the reader. Below are some suggestions for what to include.

Current land use

Characterize current land use, indicating the percentage of different uses, impervious surface and major modifications such as levees, roads, bridges, filled areas, docks, storm water or sewer outfalls, etc. Identify activities that harm water quality. Identify current shoreline public access sites.

Projected land uses

Describe and illustrate projected land uses as defined by the comprehensive plan and zoning maps, current shoreline master program environment designations, and public access plans. Include information on adjacent land use, to aid in addressing the SMA “adjacent lands” policy.

Critical areas

Describe and illustrate with maps critical areas such riparian vegetation, wetlands, geologically hazardous areas and frequently flooded areas.

Priority species

Describe and illustrate priority species presence. Characterize use of the area (spawning, rearing, migration, etc.)

Perhaps include separate heading for **threatened or endangered species**, to help readers identify readily how you used your assessment to address ESA issues. Describe any limiting factors that have been identified in existing assessments.

Opportunity areas

Identify “opportunity areas” for:

- Protecting and restoring the **environment** through land use regulation and non-regulatory means,
- Improving **public access**, and
- Promoting **water-oriented uses**.

IV. Summary of findings and recommendations

Synthesize the findings of the reach analysis and recommendations in the context of overall local and regional planning activities. This is also an appropriate place to describe data gaps. Focus on key information that would be useful to support plan development or implementation.

V. References

Include a complete list of resources used to conduct the assessment.